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THORNE

IN THE TIME THAT WAS

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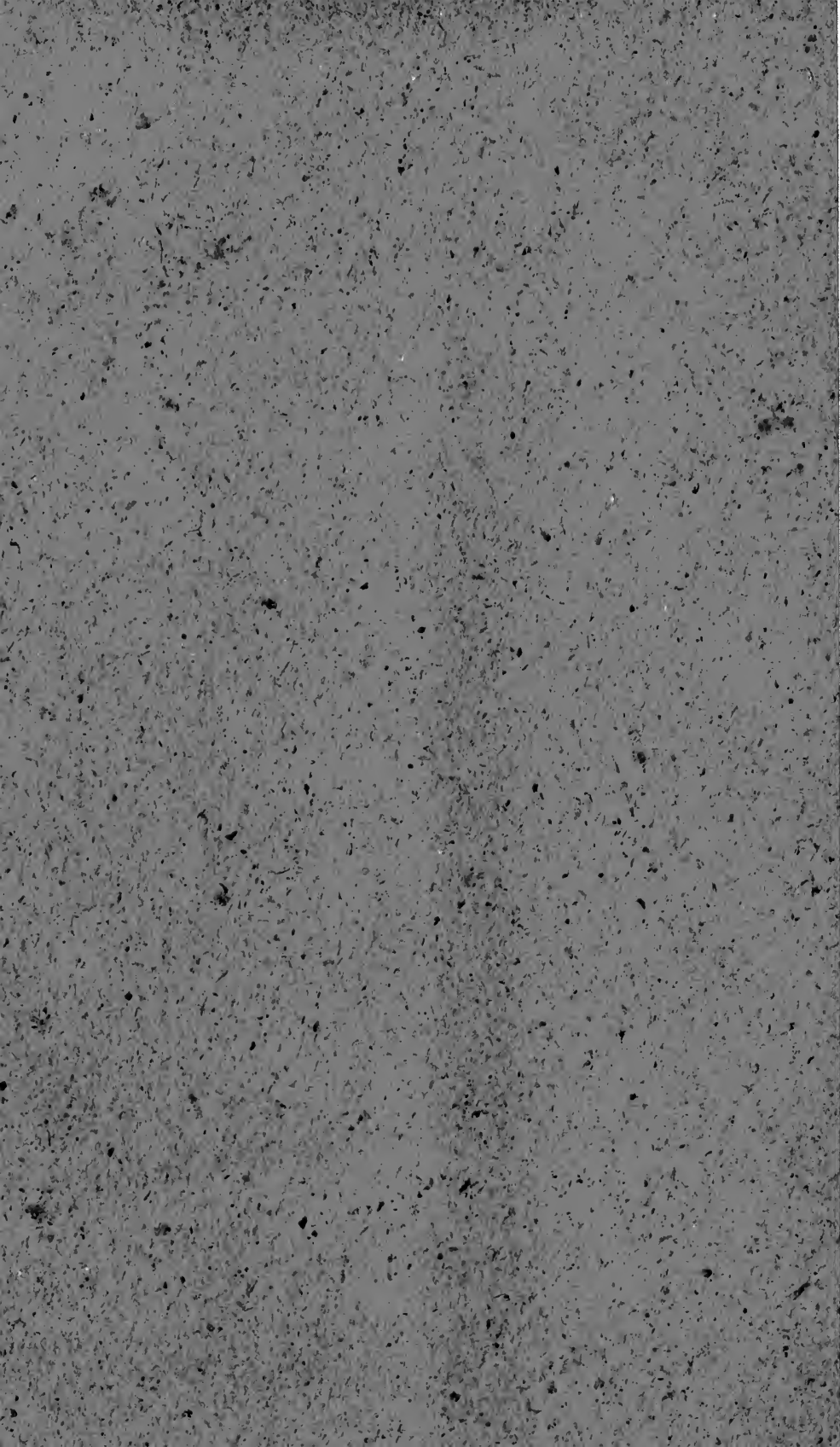
IN
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BEING LEGENDS
OF THE
ALASKA
KLINGATS

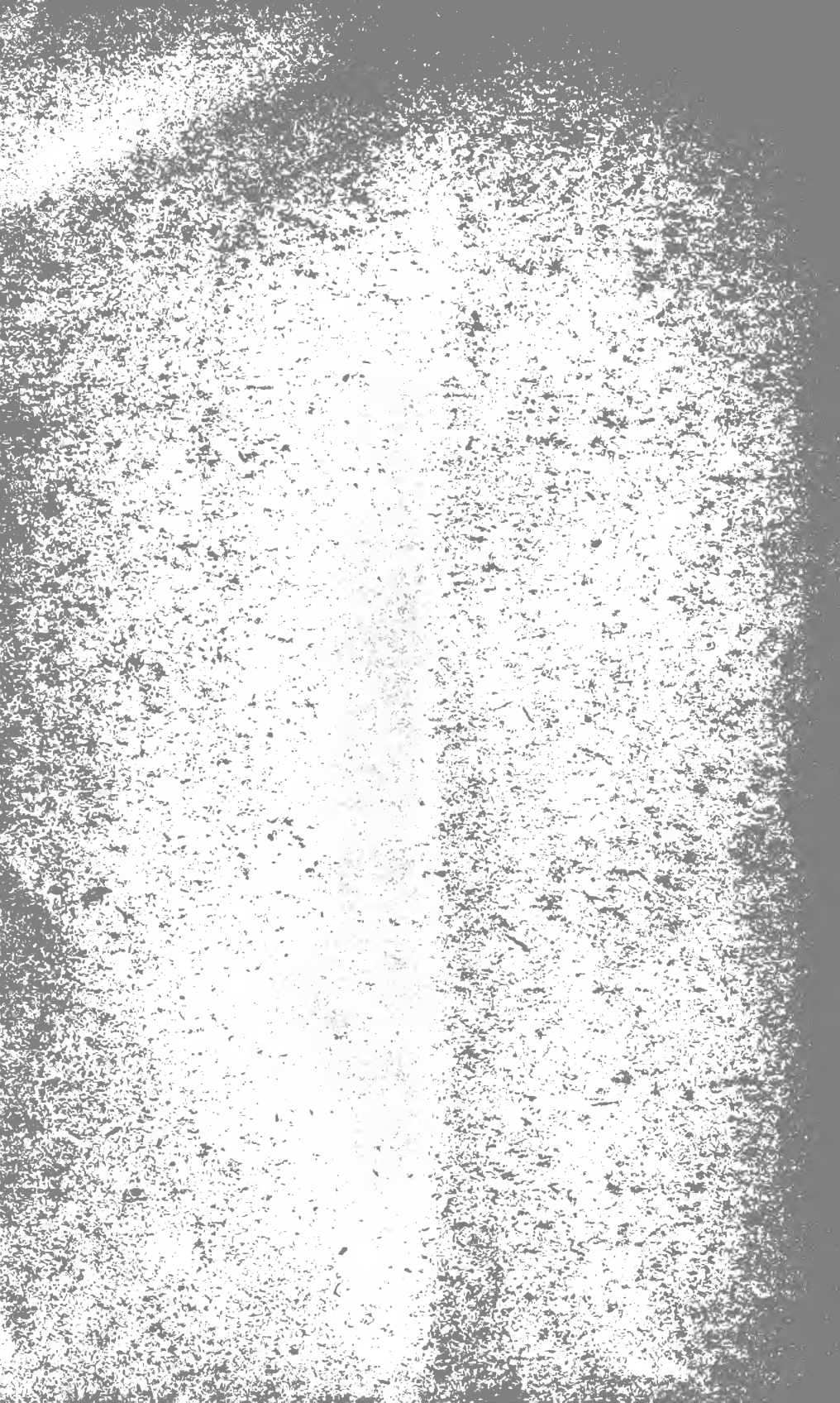
DONE INTO
ENGLISH BY

Frederick Horn



La kurya!
~~Indurathond~~

750



In The Time That Was

Dedicated
to
Ah-Koo

Done into English
by
J. Frederic Thorne
(*Kitchakahaech*)

Illustrated
by
Judson T. Sergeant
(*To-u-sucka*)

Seattle,
Washington,
U. S. A.

BEING THE FIRST
volume of a series
of Legends of the tribe
of Alaskan Indians
known as the Chil-
hats--of the Klingats
As told by Zachook the "Bear"
to Kitchakahaech the "Raven"



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In the Time That Was

"And There Was Light."

ZACHOOK of the Chilkats told me these tales of The Time That Was. But before the telling, he of the Northland and I of the Southland had travelled many a mile with dog-team, snowshoes, and canoe.

If the stories suffer in the telling, as suffer they must afar from that wondrous Alaskan background of mountain and forest, glacier and river, wrenched from the setting of campfires and trail, and divorced from the soft gutturals and halting throat notes in which they have been handed down from generation to generation of Chilkat and Chilkoot, blame not Zachook, who told them to me, and forbear to blame me who tell them to you as best I may in this stiff English tongue. They were many months in the telling and many weary miles have I had to carry them in my memory pack.

I had lost count of the hours, lost count of the days that at best are marked by little change between darkness and dawn in the Northland winter, until I knew not how long I had lain there in my blanket of snow, waiting for the lingering feet of that dawdler, Death, to put an end to my sufferings.

Some hours, or days, or years before I had been pushing along the trail to the coast, thinking little where I placed my feet and much of the eating that lay at Dalton Post House; and of other things thousands of miles from this bleak waste, where men exist in the

hope of ultimate living, with kaleidoscope death by their side; other things that had to do with women's faces, bills of fare from which bacon and beans were rigidly excluded, and comforts of the flesh that some day I again might enjoy.

Then, as if to mock me, teach me the folly of allowing even my thoughts to wander from her cold face, the Northland meted swift punishment. The packed snow of the trail beneath my feet gave way, there was a sharp click of steel meeting steel, and a shooting pain that ran from heel to head. For a moment I was sick and giddy from the shock and sudden pain, then, loosening the pack from my shoulders, fell to digging the snow with my mittened hands away from what, even before I uncovered it, I knew to be a bear trap that had bitten deep into my ankle and held it in vise clutch. Roundly I cursed at the worse than fool who had set bear trap in man trail, as I tore and tugged to free myself. As well might I have tried to wrench apart the jaws of its intended victim.

Weakened at last by my efforts and the excruciating pain I lay back upon the snow. A short rest, and again I pulled feebly at the steel teeth, until my hands were bleeding and my brain swirling.

How long I struggled blindly, viciously, like a trapped beaver, I do not know, though I have an indistinct memory of reaching for my knife to emulate his sometime method of escape. But with the first flakes of falling snow came a delicious, contentful langour, deadening the pain, soothing the weariness of my muscles, calming the tempest of my thoughts and fears, and lulling me gently to sleep to the music of an old song crooned by the breeze among the trees.

When I awoke it was with that queer feeling of foreign surroundings we sometimes experience, and the snow, the forest, the pain in my leg, my own being, were as strange as the crackling fire,

the warm blanket that wrapped me, and the Indian who bent over me smiling into my half opened eyes.

So were our trails joined and made one; Zachook of the Northland, and I of the Southland, by him later called Kitchakahaech, because my tongue moved as moved our feet on the trail, unceasingly. And because of this same love of speech in me, and the limp I bore for memory of the bear trap, for these and possibly other reasons, and that a man must have a family to bear his sins, of the Raven was I christened by Zachook, the Bear, and to the family of the Raven was I joined.

Orator among his people though he was, Zachook was no spendthrift of speech. But surly he never was; his silence was a pleasant silence, a companionable interchange of unspoken thoughts. Nor did he need words as I needed them, his eyes, his hands, his wordless lips could convey whole volumes of meaning, with lights and shades beyond the power that prisons thought. Not often did he speak at length, even to me, unless, as it came to be, he was moved by some hap or mishap of camp or trail to tell of the doings of that arch rascal, Yaeethl, the raven, God, Bird, and Scamp. And when, sitting over the fire, or with steering paddle in hand, he did open the gates that lead to the land of legend, he seemed but to listen and repeat the words of Kahn, the fire spirit, who stands between the Northland and death, or of Klingat-on-ootke, God of the Waters, whose words seemed to glisten on the dripping paddle.

So it was upon an evening in the time when we had come to be as sons of the same mother, when we shared pack and blanket and grub alike, and were known, each to the other, for the men we were. We had finished our supper of salmon baked in the coals, crisply fried young grouse and the omnipresent sourdough bread, and with the content that comes of well filled stomachs were seated with the fire between

us, Zachook studying the glowing embers, I with that friend of solitude, my pipe, murmuring peacefully in response to my puffing.

As usual, I had been talking, and my words had run upon the trail of the raven, whose hoarse call floated up to us from the river. Idly I had spoken, and disparagingly, until Zachook half smilingly, half earnestly quoted:

"He who fires in the air without aim may hit a friend."

And as I relapsed into silence added: "It is time, Kitchakahaech, that you heard of the head of your family, this same Yaeethl, the raven. Then will you have other words for him, though, when you have heard, it will 'be for you to speak them as a friend speaks or as an enemy. Of both has Yaeethl many."

I accepted the rebuke in silence, for Zachook's trail was longer then mine by many years, and he had seen and done things which were yet as thoughts with me.

For the time of the smoking and refilling of my pipe Zachook was silent, then with eyes gazing deep into the fire, began:

"Before there was a North or South, when Time was not, Klingatona-Kla, the Earth Mother, was blind, and all the world was dark. No man had seen the sun, moon, or stars, for they were kept hidden by Yakootsekaya-ka, the Wise Man. Locked in a great chest were they, in a chest that stood in the corner of the lodge of the Wise Man, in Tskekowani, the place that always was and ever will be. Carefully were they guarded, many locks had the chest, curious, secret locks, beyond the fingers of a thief. To outwit the cunning of Yaeethl were the locks

made. Yaeethl the God, Yaeethl the Raven, Yaeethl the Great Thief, of whom the Wise Man was most afraid.

"The Earth Mother needed light that her eyes might be opened, that she might bear children and escape the disgrace of her barrenness. To Yaeethl the Clever, Yaeethl the Cunning, went Klingatona-Kla, weeping, and of the Raven begged aid. And Yaeethl took pity on her and promised that she should have Kayah, the Light, to father her children.

"Many times had Yaeethl, because of his promise, tried to steal the Worlds of Light, and as many times had he failed. But with each attempt his desire grew, grew until it filled his belly and his brain.

"Was he not Yaeethl, the Great White Raven, the Father of Thieves? What if the Wise Man put new and heavier locks upon the chest after each attempt? Were locks greater than the cunning of the Raven?

"Now Yakootsekaya-ka, the Wise Man, and his wife had a daughter. Of their marriage was she, a young girl, beautiful and good. No man had ever seen her face. On no one, god or man, had the eyes of the young girl ever rested, save only her father and mother, the Wise Ones. Ye-see-et, a virgin, was she.

"Yaeethl, of his wisdom knowing that the weakness of men is the strength of children, that a babe may enter where a warrior may not cast his shadow, bethought him of this virgin, this daughter of Yakootsekaya-ka. As the thought and its children made camp in his brain Yaeethl spread wide his snow-white wings.

"Thrice he circled high in air, then took flight towards Tskekowani, the meeting place of Memory and Hope. Like Chunet, the Arrow, he flew, straight, and as Heen, the River, swift. Twice ten moons, and another, flew Yaeethl without rest of wing before he



drew near the cabin of the Wise Man. Away from the lodge he alighted, by the edge of the spring were his white wings folded, by the spring where the daughter of the Wise Man would come for water.

"Then, with the power that was his, Yaeethl, the God, changed the shape that was his, the shape of the raven; into a small white pebble did he change, and lay in the water of the spring, and in the water waited for the coming of the girl.

"Long waited Yaeethl, the Pebble, with the patience of wisdom and great desire. And the girl came.

"Beautiful in her maidenhood, graceful in the dawning of her womanhood, came the girl, the virgin, the daughter of Yakootsekaya-ka, the Keeper of the Worlds of Light. Stooping, she dipped her cup into the cool water. From the edge of the spring rolled Yaeethl, into the cup he rolled, and lay quiet in the shadow of her hand. Quiet he lay, but full of the Great Desire.

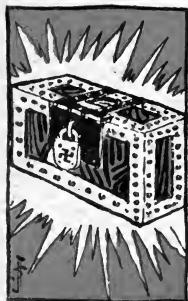
"And the girl saw him not.

"To the lodge returned the maiden, bearing the cup, the water, and the Pebble. Into the lodge entered the maiden. In the lodge where lay the Sun, Moon, and Stars, was Yaeethl.

"From the cup the Wise Man drank, but Yaeethl moved not. From the cup the Mother drank, and Yaeethl was motionless. When the Daughter raised the cup to her lips, toward her lips rolled Yaeethl. Softly he rolled, but the Mother, ever careful, heard the sound of the pebble on the cup-side, and the keen eyes of the Father saw the white pebble shine.

"'Do not drink, Daughter,' said the Wise Man, laying his hand on the maiden's arm. 'Small things sometimes contain great evils. A white pebble it may be, and only a white pebble. Yaeethl it may be, Yaeethl the Raven, Yaeethl the Father of Thieves.'

"Then the Mother took the cup and out through



the door cast the water. Through the door cast the pebble. And when the door of the lodge was closed behind him Yaeethl, the Disappointed, once more took his own form, the shape of the raven, white of wing and white of feather.

"Back to earth flew Yaeethl, angry, ashamed, but more than ever filled with a great longing for the Worlds of Light that lay locked in the chest of the Wise Man.

"Klingatona-Kla, Earth Mother, wept long and sore when empty-handed returned Yaeethl, loud she wailed, making sure she must remain forever dark and barren. But Yaeethl, the Undaunted, comforted her with strong words, and renewed his promise that the Light should be given her in marriage, and her disgrace forgotten in many children, children should she have as the shore has sand.

"Though he had flown as speeds Hoon, the North Wind, the going and coming of Yaeethl had eaten three winters and two summers.

"Awhile he rested in the lap of Klingatona-Kla, for the winter he rested, but with the coming of the spring, he spread again his wings and took flight towards the lodge of the Wise Man, towards the Great Desire. Mightily he flew, and swift, for though the dead make the journey between the opening and the closing of an eye, for the living it is a long trail.

"When again he alighted, wing weary, by the spring where the daughter of Yakootsekaya-ka drew water, Yaeethl remembered the shape and whiteness that had betrayed him, remembered the traitor Pebble, and from the memory gathered wisdom.

"Close to his side folded he the wings of whiteness, beneath his feathers tucked head and feet, and grew small. Small and yet smaller he grew, as melts ice before the fire, and when the shrinking was ended he had taken upon himself the form of Thlay-oo, the sand grain. As Thlay-oo, the Little, he waited.

"As Thlay-oo, the Invisible, watched Yaeethl for the coming of the maiden. Waited as does the bear for the coming of Takeete, the After Winter. Watched as does the lynx for the young caribou.

"And as before came the girl, cup in hand, innocent in her maidenhood, wise in her womanhood, in both beautiful. Gracefully she stooped and filled the cup with the water of the spring. Into the cup floated Yaeethl in the shape of Thlay-oo. In the spring water he sank and lay against the bottom of the cup. Small was Yaeethl, but big with desire for what was within the chest of the Wise Man.

"Then the lodge door opened and received the maiden and the cup, received Yaeethl the Grain of Sand, Yaeethl the Raven.

"To Yakootsekaya-ka, her father, the girl gave the cup, and the Wise Man drank of the water. Drank, but saw not Yaeethl, the Invisible. To the wife, her mother, the maiden gave the cup, and of the water the Mother drank. Drank, but heard not Yaeethl, the Still. Then the maiden, Ye-see-et, the Virgin, daughter of Yakootsekaya-ka, the Keeper of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, lifted the cup to her lips.

"The Mother spoke not. The Father moved not. The Daughter drank.

"Past the red of her lips, by the white of her teeth, down the throat of the girl rolled the grain of sand. Rolled until it lay close under her heart, and paused. Under the heart of the maiden lay Yaeethl, waited Yaeethl, grew Yaeethl. Warmed by the heart of the maiden Yaeethl grew.

"And time passed.

"Then the mother of the maiden, looking upon her daughter, became troubled in her mind. Troubled was the mind of the Mother, but silent her tongue.

"And time passed.

"Again the Mother looked upon her daughter, and looking, Spoke to the Wise Man, her husband, of the



thought that was hers. Spoke she of the troubled thought concerning the maiden, their daughter.

"When the Mother's thought was the thought of the Father his heart was filled with anger at his daughter for the disgrace she would bring upon his name. Angrily he questioned her, that he might revenge himself upon the thief of her innocence. But the girl looked into the eyes of her father and denied both thief and theft. No man had she seen save him, her father. Of the cause of The Thought that troubled them was she ignorant, and as innocent as ignorant. And the truth shone from her eyes as she spoke, straight was her tongue. Empty of shame was her face.

"And the Mother, looking into the eyes of her daughter, believed. And after a time was the Wise Man convinced. Yet troubled were they and lost upon the trail of thoughts. Tender had they always been of their daughter. Ten times as gentle were they now, for Yaeethl lay big under the heart of the girl, though they knew him not, and of their love was she in sore need.

"And time passed.

"Then upon the maiden came Kod-se-tee, the Woman Pain, and Yaeethl entered the lodge.

"Yaeethl whom they knew not, Yaeethl the Boy in the maiden's arms. Tokanay, the Baby, they called him, with love-light in their eyes they named him. Strong and large grew he quickly. So quickly grew he that the maiden and her mother were in a valley between the mountain of pride and the mountain of wonder. And in the Wise Man's heart flowed a great river of love for Tokanay the Beautiful, Tokanay the Swift Growing. In the hands of the Boy were the three hearts held. Their eyes and their thoughts were filled with him, so that room for other things there was not. So was the locked chest and its contents forgotten.

"Then on a day, a day of days to the Three, the Boy spoke his first word.

"'Kakoon.'

"Kakoon, the Sun, was the word, and 'Kakoon, Kakoon, Kakoon,' said the boy, crying and stretching his arms toward the chest in the corner of the lodge.

"The Wise Man listened and laughing said: 'He would take my place as Keeper of the Worlds of Light.' Then because his heart was so soft with love that he could refuse the Boy nothing, Yakootsekaya-ka undid the many curious locks and fastenings of the great chest and took out the Sun.

"Kakoon, the Sun, he took and gave it to the Boy wherewith to play. And the Boy ceased his crying when the Sun was in his hands, laughing as he rolled the Yellow World about the floor of the lodge. All day did the Three watch him with loving eyes.

"On the next day the Sun lay in a corner of the lodge, unheeded by the Boy. A new word had he learned:

"'Dis-s.'

"Dis-s, the Moon, was the second word, and as before, 'Dis-s, Dis-s,' cried the Boy.

"Proudly and lovingly the Wise Man laughed, saying: 'Surely is he eager to take my place.' And from the moving of the love in his heart that answered to the cry of the Boy as arrow to bowstring, Yakootsekaya-ka unfastened the strong and heavy locks of the chest and into the hands of the Boy gave the Moon for plaything. Of Dis-s, the Moon, made he plaything for the Boy. And for that day were the Boy's cries hushed as he spun and tumbled the White World on the lodge floor. And his laughter was music to the ears of the Three.

"But the next day the Moon lay with the Sun. In the corner they lay and the Boy looked not at them. Another word was his cry, a new word.

"'Takhonaha.'

"Takhonaha, the Stars, was the cry of the Boy,

and again, to comfort him, the Wise Man opened the great chest, and from it poured the Stars into the lap of the Boy, poured the chest empty of the Worlds of Light. And the Boy laughed loud. Laughed until the Wise Man, the Wife, and the Maiden, his mother, laughed that he laughed, as he dripped the bright stars through his fingers, dripped the waterfall of stars. Then the Wise Man questioned as he laughed: 'What shall he cry for tomorrow? And what shall we give him, the Unsatisfied, now that the chest is empty?'

"And the Boy laughed.

"Night came, and the Wise Man, and his Wife, and the Maiden-Mother, their daughter, slept. With Tokanay, the Baby, in the hollow of her arm slept the girl.

"As they slept, from the hollow of the arm of the maiden there crept a raven, Yaeethl the Raven, Yaeethl the Snow-White, Yaeethl the Father of Thieves.

"Softly crept he, with many times turned head and watchful eye on the Three, sleeping. To the corner where the Boy, careless, had dropped the Shining Worlds, to the corner by the open, empty chest crept Yaeethl the Noiseless.

"And the Three slept..

"Beneath his right wing hid Yaeethl the Sun. Beneath his left wing hid he the Moon. Within his claws gathered he the Stars.

"Asleep were the Three.

"The lodge door was closed, locked was the door of Yakootsekaya-ka, Keeper of the Worlds of Light. Fastened tight were the windows. Barred were door and windows to keep out Yaeethl, the Thief. For a moment stood Yaeethl, turning his head to find some hole through which he might escape, then toward the wide chimney he flew.

"Still slept the Three.

"Wide spread were the wings of Yaeethl, the Flying, and the great light of the Sun was uncovered.

Brightly it shone, straight into the eyes of the Wise Man gleamed the fierce light.

"Awake was Yakootsekaya-ka, crying: 'Yaeethl! Yaeethl! 'Tis Yaeethl! Awake!'

"Awake was the Wife and the Daughter, and the Three strove to catch the Raven, the White One. But the great light of the Sun was in their eyes and they were blinded so they fell in each other's way. And in the throat of the chimney was Yaeethl, flying upward.

"Then did the Wise Man call upon Kahn, his sister's son, Kahn, the God of Fire, to aid him. Up blazed Kahn and tried to catch Yaeethl, the Fleeing, in his red teeth, but near the top of the chimney was Yaeethl, so that the teeth of Kahn could not reach him.

"Then Kahn called upon the Wise Man to blow, and the Wise Man puffed out his cheeks and blew with full lungs, and by his blowing Kahn stretched high his long black arms and tightly curled them about the White Raven.

"Then did Yaeethl, the Strong of Wing, struggle mightily. Against Kahn, the Fire God, did he struggle, beating with his white wings. Long did they struggle, until from the lungs of the Wise Man was the breath gone, and the arms of the Fire God, the smoke arms, grew thin and weak.

"With his wings beat Yaeethl, breaking the hold of the smoke arms, Yaeethl the Free, Yaeethl the Ever Black One.

"Forever were the wings and feathers of the Raven blackened by the smoke arms of Kahn, the God of Fire.

"Back toward Klingatona-Kla, the Earth Mother, the Barren, flew Yaeethl holding tight the Sun, Moon, and Stars. But after him came the Wise Man, full of anger. And the Shining Worlds grew heavy. Heavy was the pack of Yaeethl, and weary his wings. Afar off was Klingatona-Kla.



"Then did Yaeethl, the Pursued, Yaeethl the Heavy Laden, cast from him Kakoon, the Sun. To the east threw he the Sun, and flew on.

"Again did the Wise Man come close behind, and again did Yaeethl ease his burden. From him threw he Dis-s, the Moon. To the West cast he the Moon.

"Then was Yakootsekaya-ka left behind for a time, but the Raven weary and burdened, flew slowly, and once again he felt the breath of the Wise Man ruffle his feathers. No time had Yaeethl to stop, on nothing could he rest.

"Opened he his claws and scattered wide the Stars. To North and South fell Takhonaha, the Stars, to East and West fell they.

"Then was the promise of Yaeethl fulfilled. Thus kept he his word to the Earth Mother, and gave her light, that she might see. Gave her Kayah, the Light, to father her children and wipe out the disgrace of her barrenness. And the children of Klingatona-Kla were as the sands of the sea.

"But upon Yaeethl, the Raven, had fallen the curses of the Wise Man. Three curses: Blackness, Hoarseness, and the Keeping of One Shape. And as his feathers were blackened, so, thereafter, was his heart darkened with eternal selfishness."

I was silent. My pipe had gone out, and Zachook was bent low over the dying fire. I was thinking of another story of a Child who had given Light to the World, and suffered for the bringing.





The Water Carrier

"When You Give a Potlach, Forget Not He Who
Carries the Water."

THANK Yaeethl for that," said Zachook as I rose with dripping beard from the stream where I had drunk deep, with many sighs of satisfaction and relief. "His pack is not heavy with thanks of men these days."

"Thank the Raven? For what?"

"The starving man asks not the name of the owner of the cache, but his heart is filled with gratitude."

"That may be, but no cache of Yaeethl's is in this stream."

"The ignorant deny all they cannot see."

"Wise sayings feed neither fire nor belly," I retorted, provoked by the criticism of my companion, thinly veiled behind his customary proverbs, and attempting to pay him in his own coin from my slender store of Klingat adages. "'Only a beggar gives thanks.'" Is it not your teaching that he who gives in this world receives the benefit, since in Tskekowani* his possessions shall be as his gifts here? If Yaeethl wants my thanks, if they are the due of the Raven, he has them, but why or for what I know not. Your words are like the ice of a windy day, rough and cloudy."

"You are right, Cousin. I forget at times that you are only a white man. Let me touch thy ear with my tongue."

* *The next world.*

"Cha-*auk*.* In the Time before Time, there was no water upon the earth or in the bowl of the sea, and Shanagoose the Sky gave neither rain nor snow.

"In one place only was Heen, the water. In a deep well it was, the father of wells, hidden among the mountains that lie between here and Tskekowani.

"To Heenhadowa, the Thirst Spirit, belonged the well, by Heenhadowa was it guarded. By the door of the well-house sat he by day, in front of the well-house door was his bed by night. And none might enter.

"Never did he leave the well, morning, noon or night. From the water he took life, to the water he gave life. To no man, woman, or child, to neither animal nor bird, to nothing that walks, creeps, or flies would Heenhadowa give of the precious water. Not so much as would moisten the tongue of Ta-ka the Mosquito would he give, though men died.

"To quench their thirst men chewed the roots of young trees and the stalk of Yan-a-ate.†

"A few men there were, brave of heart and moose-legged, who had travelled the weary journey to the well among the mountains, the mountains marked with the trail of Oonah, the Gray One, Death, seeking the water that is life.

"And of them?

"Is it not well said that Oonah, Death, and Koo-stay, Life, are brothers, and he who seeks one finds the other?

"And Heenhadowa laughed, first at their black lips, later at their white bones, and drank deep but gave not.

"Now Yaeethl, the Raven, Desirer of All Things, longed most for those that were forbidden, concealed, or like the favor of women, not to be had for the asking. And since the water was denied, his tongue ached with dryness, and Yan-a-ate lost its savor. Also was his heart moved by the prayers

* *Ages ago.*

† *Species of wild celery.*

of men and the cries of women. But his tongue troubled him more than did his heart, his tongue and his cupidity, so that he was moved to try his cunning where the strength and bravery of men had failed.

"No crooked trail through forests and over mountains had Yaeethl to measure with his feet, but on his wings of blackness was he borne straight to the place of the well.

"Well and well-house he found, found also Heenhadowa, watchful, moving not from his place. As one greets an old friend new found spoke Yaeethl to the Thirst Spirit. With smooth tongue and soft words spoke the Raven, claiming kinship through the cousin of his grandmother's grandmother. Said also that when he left his father's country he was bidden seek that old and true friend of the family, Heenhadowa the Wise, the Generous Giver of Water. As bidden, so had he obeyed and flown straight without halt or rest to bow before his mighty relative, and taste of his wonderful well, the like of which not even his father had, who possessed all things.

"But the Maker of Thirst laughed at the Raven and mocked him, bidding him, if he would drink, find or dig a well of his own.

"Again Yaeethl recounted their connected lineage, from mother to mother's mother, from family to family and tribe to tribe, tied with proof and argument, lashed with meek bows, and smoothed with soft flattery.

"Heenhadowa laughed scornfully, cast from him the claim of cousinship, and mocked at Yaeethl's tongue, dry from the dust of many words.

"Then Yaeethl drew about him the parka of anger and answered scorn with scorn, mockery with mockery, and laughter with laughter.

"In his father's country, said Yaeethl, they gave

the name of Heenhadowa to mangy dogs and unclean women. Glad was the heart of Yaeethl that the Thirst Spirit denied the relationship he had laid as a snare, the denial would make his father proud. As for the well, 'twas now known to the most stupid, even to men, that it was but an empty hole in the ground, covered by the well-house to hide the dryness thereof, and no deeper than Kaelt-tay, the Seagull, scratches in the sand for nesting.

"Laughed Heenhadowa again, saying that belief or unbelief of Raven or man lessened not his treasure by a drop.

"Then Yaeethl's words flared as firesparks. Hot words of evil sounding names, vile as only the brain of Yaeethl could fashion, taunts that bit and stung festeringly like the nettles of Sech-ut,* names that would disgrace the family of a Siwash, callings that would make even a squaw-man hang his head in shame. Can I say more of the bitterness of the tongue of Yaeethl?

"Heenhadowa laughed.

"To battle Yaeethl challenged the Thirst Spirit: 'Come forth and meet me, you fatherless son of a shameless mother, littering of a slave's slave.

"'Come with me to the plain below and I will make of thy blood another well, for another of thy family of dogs to guard.'

"Flatteries and arguments, insults and challenges fell into the same echoless hole, bringing to Yaeethl only the laughter of Heenhadowa and increase of thirst.

"Then was the heart of Yaeethl heavy within him, but not so heavy as his face said, for it is not the way of the Raven to eat quickly of discouragement, though he turned and left the well and its guardian like a gambler who has lost his last blanket.

"Not far did he go. Only so far as to be hidden

* *Devil's Club.*

from the eyes of Heenhadowa, where silence might mother the children of his brain. And since the brain of the Raven is full of the seeds of cunning a plan was quickly born.

"Back toward the well flew Yaeethl, but, since he who sees the tail of a lone wolf imagines the whole pack, he alighted at a distance where the eyes of Heenhadowa saw as one sees in a fog. A space the size a man uses for his lodge he cleared of all bushes and weeds, to the smallest blade of grass he cleared it of everything that grew.

"When the space was as the palm of a man's hand the Raven spread his wings until every feather showed and, first bowing low to Hoon-nach, Yunda-haech, Sa-nach, and Deckta-haech,* who guard the four corners of the earth, walked slowly around the sides three times, at every third step stopping and making strange motions and stranger sounds, as does an Icht† when he would drive the evil spirits away.

"From each corner he took a stone and spat upon it and cast it over his shoulder, and in the dust drew the shapes of animals like unto rolled deer-thongs, animals with two tongues such as no man has seen upon earth.‡

"To the space Yaeethl dragged logs and laid them end across end and bottom on top. As each tier was laid he sang words in a strange language, and as he sang, spat upon and cast pebbles over his shoulder as before.

"But toward Heenhadowa were the eyes and tongue of Yaeethl the eyes of the blind and the tongue of the dumb. Busily he worked and loudly sang his charms, but to the Thirst Spirit he gave neither look nor word.

"On Yaeethl were the eyes of Heenhadowa fastened, strained were his eyes, watching the doings of the Raven, wide his ears to catch the words of the songs and charms.

* North, East, South and West.

† Witch Doctor.

‡ Snakes are unknown in Alaska.



"When the roof was on and the house finished to the last piece of moss between the logs, Yaeethl again circled it three times, bowed again to the guardians of the earth's ends, and without looking behind, entered the lodge and closed the door.

"Curiosity filled eyes and ears, heart and belly of Heenhadowa. Though he had lived since the Beginning, never before had he seen what that day he had seen, never had his ears been greeted with such words and songs.

"And to Heenhadowa the inside of the lodge was the pack, as was the outside the lone wolf tail.

"Even so had Yaeethl planned, nor was that the end of the cunning of the Raven, who knew that no door can bar the going in of curiosity.

"Long sat Heenhadowa before the door of his well-house, gazing at the lodge of Yaeethl. And the longer he sat and the longer he gazed the keener grew his desire to see what was hidden from his eyes by the walls and closed door, grew until it tortured him as the thirsty are tortured, beyond endurance.

"And Heenhadowa rose from his seat by the well.

"From the place where he had sat for ages rose the Thirst Spirit and stepped softly. Toward the closed door he moved as moves one who is pulled at the end of a thong, for the fear of the unknown was upon him. But stronger than his fear was his desire to know what lay behind the door, stronger even than his fear of those strange animals that were drawn in the dust, dust pictures that made his blood ice.

"Before the door he stopped and glanced back the way he had come, at his well and well-house he looked, then pushing against the door with his hand, stepped within the house built by Yaeethl, made by Yaeethl the Raven, Yaeethl the Cunning.

"No man knows what Heenhadowa found within the lodge of the Raven. Only this we know.

"When the time of the boiling of a salmon had passed, from the door stepped Yaeethl walking as a man walks who has been carrying a heavy pack. Behind him he closed the door and against it rolled a heavy stone, a stone so heavy that not even K'hoots the Grizzly, the Strong One, could have moved it away again.

"Within the lodge was silence, silence big with unborn noise.

"To the well of Heenhadowa, the father of wells among the mountains, the well untasted of man or beast, flew Yaeethl, Yaeethl the Desirer of All Things.

"And when the Raven stood beside the well he bowed his head and drank.

"Some say that it took him many moons, some put it the length of a man's life, but, long time or short time, when the head of Yaeethl the Raven was lifted the well was dry.

"Of water there was none in the well of Heenhadowa.

"In the belly and mouth of the Raven was the water. All.

"Then did Yaeethl spread wide his wings of blackness and fly the way of his coming.

"As he flew over the bosom of Klingatona-Kla, the Earth Mother, in this place and in that he spat out some of the water. And where spat the Raven there sprang up streams, and rivers, and lakes.

"When he had flown so long and so far that the water was gone from his mouth, and in his belly was not fresh, then from his belly and his mouth he cast it, salt, and Athleh, the Ocean, was."

I waited silently, for there was an uplift in



Zachook's voice that made me think there was more to follow, but it was only:

"If you listen to the words of them that know not, they will tell you that Haechl is a great bird the falling of whose eyelids makes thunder, the flashing of whose eye is the lightning, but if my words be the words of truth, then is thunder the angry voice of Heenhadowa whom Yaeethl made prisoner, and lightning the cracks in the lodge walls when he throws himself against them, struggling to be free. Should he succeed——

"But, bird or Thirst Spirit, from Yaeethl is the gift of water. So say I again — — when you drink, give thanks to the Raven that chewed roots are not the answer to thy dry lips,—give thanks, and pray that the rock rolls not away."

And I gave thanks, quoting to myself another of Zachook's sayings, "Better a wasted arrow than lost game."



Ta-ka the Mosquito and Khandatagoot the Woodpecker

“As Foolish as One Who Shoots Arrows at
Mosquitoes.”

ZACHOOK, with a half amused, half sympathetic smile at my futile efforts to slaughter a small percentage of the mosquito cloud that enveloped us, made a smudge of leaves, and I willingly exchanged the tortures of being eaten alive for those of slow strangulation in the acrid smoke.

My remarks had been neither calm nor patient, consisting mainly of my entire vocabulary of opprobrious adjectives and epithets several times repeated and diversified, aided by a wide, but wholly inadequate, range of profanity in the various languages at my command. And, to digress slightly, I would recommend the study of Arabic and Spanish to those feeling a similar need; they do not meet all requirements of forcible expression, but they add some wonderful flights of imagination to the more practical English expletives.

Zachook was apparently as unimpressed as the mosquitoes, but when I had recovered some portion of my breath and equanimity, remarked: “He who shoots with his tongue should be careful of his aim.”

Choking with anger and smoke I could only splutter in reply, while Zachook continued:

“Ta-ka is Ta-ka, and Yaeethl is Yaeethl.”

“What has the Raven to do with these insufferable pests? Has he not enough to answer for without linking his name with these suckers of blood? Yaeethl is Yaeethl, but Ta-ka is Ta-ka.”

“Yaeethl or Ta-ka. The get of the Raven are ravens, and from Yaeethl comes Ta-ka the Biter.





"When the selfishness of men had driven the gods from the earth, the Great Ones held a council in Tskekowani, a potlach in the World Beyond. All the gods were there. They talked of the sins of men and of the punishments that should be visited upon them. Long they talked.

"Then Theunghow, Chief of Gods, called each by name, and bade him name his sending.

"And each god named a sickness, a pain, or a killing.

"At one side stood Oonah the Death Shadow, and in his hand held his quiver. And as each punishment was named, into his quiver placed Oonah an arrow, sharp-pointed, swift-flying, death-carrying.

"The quiver was full, and all had spoken, all save Yaeethl the Raven, who by the cook pot sat smiling, eating.

"To Yaeethl spoke K'hoots the Grizzly, saying:

"Dost thou send nothing, Brother? Behold, the Quiver of Death is full, and from the Raven is there no arrow of punishment for men. What arrow gives Yaeethl?"

"Why bother me when I am eating? Is there not time after the pot is empty? Many arrows there are. Because men insult me shall gods spoil my eating?" Thus spoke the Raven as he scraped the pot.

"Then Hckt the Frog urged, saying:

"Art thou a god, or is thy belly a god, that in the council the Raven takes no part?"

"A god am I, and a god have I been since the Beginning, thou son of wind and slime. But that my ears may be no longer troubled, a little punishment will I send, that the sons of men forget me not. No arrow from Yaeethl shall find place in Oonah's quiver. Arrow and messenger both will I send. Thy punishments carry the peace of death, mine the torment of life."

" 'And this punishment of thine?' asked Hckt, sneering.

"And Yaeethl, as from the pot he cleaned the last morsel, replied:

" 'Ta-ka.'

"Of all the punishments named by the gods, the first to reach the earth was that of Yaeethl, - - Ta-ka the Mosquito.

"To Khandatagoot the Woodpecker, the simple-minded, went Ta-ka, and from the Woodpecker claimed hospitality. And the rights of a stranger gave Khandatagoot to Ta-ka, gave him a place by the fire, and of his food a share, for his head a shelter, treating him as the son of a sister is treated. Together they fished and hunted, together they ate and slept. Of the hunting and fishing the chief part was Khandatagoot's, of the eating and sleeping Ta-ka's, Ta-ka who from Yaeethl came.

"On a morning the Woodpecker fixed his canoe, and alone to the hunt went the Mosquito.

"All day was Ta-ka gone. Low hung the sun when to camp he returned. Slow flying came the Mosquito, and as blood is red, so was the body of Ta-ka, and swelled mightily.

"Then was the Woodpecker frightened, thinking his friend wounded, and crying, ran to help him. To the ground sank Ta-ka, but no wound could Khandatagoot find.

"Many questions asked the Woodpecker, and to them Ta-ka replied:

" 'No hurt have I, but full is my belly, full of the choicest eating that ever made potlach. Yet much did I leave behind, the feasting of many months did I leave.'

"Then was the belly of Khandatagoot pinched with hunger for this good eating, and of Ta-ka claimed his share.

"On the tongue of the Woodpecker placed

Ta-ka a drop, saying: 'No more can I give of what I have eaten, but as you have shared with me, so shall I share with you. The fill of many bellies is there left.'

" 'Where is this sweet eating?' asked Khanda-tagoot, 'Tell me the trail that I too may feast until my wings are heavy.'

" 'No trail is there, Brother. The red juice of a dead tree is this eating, a dead tree in the forest. It's name I know not, but hunt, and you shall find it. Go quickly, lest others get there first.'

" 'And since then,' said Zachook, throwing another handful of leaves on the fire, "since then the Woodpecker spends his days seeking in dead trees the red juice that flows in the veins of live men."



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